the festival of the Mother and the Child. It was something to do, after all.

The idea got hold of her that that holy group was still to be found somewhere, but only by the Gentiles. A passionate thought assailed her, a passionate longing to find it, too—whatever it was, the childlike peace that the bells kept insisting on. The little mother and the little baby. She bade the men leave the room, and took the old letter out of her breast and reread it. Suddenly she seemed to see something fresh, something significant in its blurred and sprawling lines, something she had not seen before. She rang violently.

"The carriage," she said, "the brougham. At once, Parkins; I am going some distance."

When the brougham came round she got hurriedly into it, a priceless ermine coat coveing her rose colored dress, and told the coachman an address that made him stare.

They drove through the dirty, crowded streets, it seemed, interminably. Outside she only half saw the crowds of hurrying people. She glanced at her own face in the mirror fixed in her padded carriage. How awful she looked! She would have to change her cook, or her doctor, or her milliner, or somebody. On and on they drove, leaving the better lighted streets for places more squalid—drab, narrow places, odorous of fried fish, that made Mrs. Levison shudder. How disgusting! Would they ever get there They seemed to go through interminable miles of slums. At last, in despair, the coachman drew up and asked, rather sardonically, for further directions. They had to inquire of sundry shabby passersby, who stared so hard and so strangely at Mrs. Levison that she drew her ermine coat more tightly round her, and crossly wished herself at home. She had partly got over her "morbid" fit. After all, this was the maddest, wildest goose chase. Here she was alone in this heathenish place, and it was late. A neighboring clock struck 10 as they drew up at last in a melancholy-looking yard under an archway, with the legend, "Robinson's Mews" on it. Happily, the shabby little place was apparently deserted.

She leaned out of the carriage and curtly asked a lounging man if one Robinson lived here. He looked like some sort of stableman connected with the place.

"Yes," he said, dubiously, his eyes on the horses, "he do live there. But he ain't in now."

He pointed upward with his thumb to where a bright light shone in a small window.

"There seems to be some one in," said Mrs. Levison, looking at the light.

"Oh, most likely," said the laconic stableman, much more interested in Mrs. Levison's handsome bays than in herself.

She got out of the brougham and told the coachman to wait. She would not be long. The weather had cleared a little since yesterday, and a thin smattering of snow lay over the cobble stones of the small yard and on the roofs of the little houses. A rather tardy moon flickered out of the clouds on to this glittering layer and made it sparkle. It reminded Mrs. Levison of a Christmas card.

She entered the little dark doorway, and, finding no one about, began to ascend the narrow staircase. There was no light at all. The two lower rooms seemed to be stables, and the others must have been lofts, for the smell of hay was overpowering. It filled the whole place. Where on earth did the people live? She seemed to be climbing stairs indefinitely. Then suddenly she heard the sound of faint singing. It came floating down the stairs as she struggled up in the darkness, hampered by her long flounced and fluffy skirts, and surged to her ears with a crooning, cooing, dreary sound that was indescribable. She followed the sound of it, up, up, until she came panting at last to a floor on which was the room from whence it came floating. She stood a moment, her heart beating. Then she knocked. The singing paused.

"Come in," said a placid voice.

She opened the door with a sweeping flourish, an assertive way she had—was she not the great Mrs. Levison?—and then stood stock still on the spot, gazing dumbly at the sight that met her eyes.

The little room was full of candles, cheap, tinted, twisted things, like barley sugar sticks—they call them Christmas candles in such neighborhoods as John Robinson's Mews. The little common china ornaments on the mantlepiece and the small, mean pictures on the wall were decorated with evergreens and holly; a gay little fire danced in the grate, around which were some pots and pans.

The candles and the greenery gave a mystic effect and a peculiar odor, very familiar. But in the center of all this sat—the Stores Madonna! Surely the same come to life, incarnated? There was the same browne, girlish face, the piquant, young features, the smilling, ecstatic eyes; over the bended head was a blue shawl, or mantle, covering the hair and shoulders and falling down and enwrapping—oh, what? What? Something that moved and cooed and kicked under it. Something that made the little mother's face like an angel's; something that stopped the older woman's heart beats. Mrs. Levison gasped.

"Are you Dora Robinson?" she said, in an awstricken voice. Was that a vision or a real woman? She had seen such things in Continental churches. But the girl started at the strange voice. She had not raised her rapt head at first, thinking it was only one of the neighbors.

"Who are you?" she said, sharply, not like a Madonna at all. In her amazement at the sight of the gorgeously attired lady, she jerked the shawl, and it fell to one side, disclosing suddenly the loveliest, fattest, most dimpled boy baby in the world. The soft light from the pink candles and the fire danced on his lovely limbs and beautiful body; he kicked ecstatically at the genial warmth, and cooed in a baby exuberance of delight. The girl clutched at him, suddenly covering him up from sight with a defiant, protective movement, and rose quickly to her feet.

Mrs. Levison advanced a few snort steps, her eyes blazing.

"I am the mother of Reuben Levison," she said furiously. A sudden pang of blind jealousy was in her heart like a physical anguish. "Who are you, I say?"

The girl looked at her steadily out of grave brown eyes.

"I am the mother of Reuben Levison," she said, calmly.

"Are you mad?" gasped the wretched woman, "I tell you he was my son. I am his mother! Don't you understand?"

With an infinitely graceful movement she lifted the blue shawl and bared the lovely man child again to full view. Mrs. Levison took a quick step toward it. "Never"—she began to say, and then stopped, as her eager eyes fell on the little upturned face, straling at her gravely.

"Quick—quick—let me see," she said, her voice breaking in her wild haste, seizing the girl's arm, and turning her and her burden boldly to the light of the cheap candles.

She scanned the baby's features. Reuben had had dark brown eyebrows, thick and full, and the left one had a little lift up at the outer corner, a tiny twist that they had always said meant originality. The baby had just such eyebrows. Brown fluff decorated his round head, but his eyes were deep clear blue—Reuben had had blue eyes, strangely enough. Closer she looked. There was Reuben's short nose; the round formation of his forehead; there, clutched up as in a vice, his long, beautiful fingers.

The girl looked doubtful and suspicious, but cautiously turned the lovely little creature over to her view. There under his left arm was a brown mole, the very mole that Reuben had had. That was final. His very own!

Mrs. Levison gave one cry, and burst into a passionate flood of tears, dropping her poor face onto the baby's body.

"Oh, Reuben, my child, my child," she sobbed out, her long pent-up grief getting the better of her at last. She seemed as though she would fall or have a fit with weeping. The girl pushed her firmly, but gently, with her disengaged hand into a chair, where, for a few moments, she rocked herself in a frenzied passion of grief, swaying to and fro like a woman gone mad with anguish.

The girl, like all London girls, was a bad hand at the expression of graceful sentiment. But love and suffering had taught her instinctive tenderness. Without saying a single word she knelt down in front of the anguished figure and pushed the little warm babe right into her arms. The other woman took it and held it to her bare breast, rocking it to and fro, and kissing its soft face passionately. It was Reuben—Reuben himself come back from the dead. Reuben as he was when first she held him in her arms.

The baby's soft body felt slippery and satiny to hold; oh, the rapture of that touch. He put up his little clutching hands and caught her exquisite diamond necklace, trying to put the beautiful pendant into his soft, wet little mouth. Was this heaven? Was she dead, and with Reuben again? Or was it life? Life all over again, renewed, reblest, revived forever.

She lifted her wet eyes at last from the face of the lovely thing, and spoke to the mother.

"You must come back with me tonight," she said—breathlessly. "He must see it—Eli must."

"Who?" Said the mother.

"Eli.'

"His grandfather, do you mean?" said the girl, slowly.

"Gandfather?—his father," she began, then laughed suddenly, "no, no—his grandfather," she said. "I am his grandmother! Oh, dear! oh, dear! oh, dear." she rocked him to and fro, laughing rapturously in her tears. He laughed with her, rolling and kicking gorgeously at the fun. He thought it was a new game, and a rather good one. The girl looked down at them thoughtfully.

"I wonder if I could leave," she said. "We were keeping Christmas, baby and I, all alone. Father's had to go to see some horses a long way off. It's a paying affair. But he won't be home till tomorrow. Still, I could leave word with a neighbor."

Mrs. Levison glanced up at her. "The carriage is waiting," she said.

The word carriage seemed to upset the girl.

"But of course, I haven't anything to wear," she said, her pretty face growing blank.

Mrs. Levison's eyes again left the baby to dwell upon the ill-dressed mother. She was certainly quite different from the duchess's daughter. If Reuben had only married Lady Ethel!—then the baby kicked and made another clutch at the diamond pendant. And a wave of gratitude to her who had given her another Reuben got the better of Mrs. Levison's sartorial prejudices. After all, you may wear things "ready made," but if you have also brought about the resurrection of the worshipped dead you are worthy of infinite consideration.

"Of course," ruminated the girl, her eyes bent thoughtfully on the odd group before her, "there's my black net evening dress, but the flounce is torn, and the sleeves are out of fashion. I havn't had any time for—for fashion with that great boy. Still, now he is getting bigger perhaps I could think about those things a bit more. I suppose I should have to."

"I shall never have time for fashion again," said Mrs. Levison, softly, her eyes on the "great boy's" face.

The girl looked admiringly at the vieux rose dress.

"Oh, you can talk," she said. "I could be very superior to clothes myself if I was dressed like you!"

She looked down at her own poor stuff skirt and washed blouse, and then tore off the Madonna blue shawl impatiently. She was a pretty, fresh faced creature, but clearly she had a temper.

"Put that on," said Mrs. Levison, imperiously; "put it back over your head as it was. Eli must see it so. I insist upon it. Afterward my maid shall rig you out in some things of mine. Blouses will fit anybody—good blouses. That's what—I—always say. Besides, you're plump—there's not so much difference between us, thanks to Charmette."

But Dora did not look likely to thank "Charmette" quite so effusively. The reason was perhaps obvious. Mrs. Levison's enamel and rouge had suffered severely with the weeping fit, and went in streaks down her hard face like little runnels in a muddy road. Her red toupee was all awry by reason of Reuben seriously regarding it as a wooly bear, and making for it violently with both clutching fists. But, as he called bears "growlies," and that only indistinctly, she was not offended at his repeated and rapturous comments, and, indeed, poor, tender fool, supposed he was miraculously saying "Granny." And after all he intended it to be quite as complimentary. All compliments depend on the point of view.

"Then there's baby," continued the worried young mother, biting her forefinger, and looking thoughtfully at her tiny son. "He hasn't many clothes. He always wants to go without 'em, anyhow. He's happiest as he is now. But father's had a lot of ill luck, and we couldn't afford to make him smart. My illness cost a lot. If you could wait a week we could make ourselves quite swell, baby and I, and then"—

"Oh, my child," said Mrs. Levison, "I can't wait till you and baby are swells, indeed I can't. You're the two prettiest things I ever saw in my life, just as you are now. I wouldn't hear of the baby being dressed. See"—She put him back in his mother's arms and tore off her ermine coat, wrapping the little fat thing into its downy softnesses. "There, he must come so, just so—to—grandfather," she said laughing.

Her bare neck shimmering with its priceless diamonds, her perfectly fitting pink gown, looked startling in the poor room. Dora gave a cry of dismay.

"It's all right," said Mrs. Levison; "the brougham is all padded and quite warm. Leave your message and come. We'll fetch your father tomorrow."

The girl rapidly arranged this with the neighbor. When she came back she shyly offered a brown cape of her own for Mrs. Levison's shoulders, an old cloth thing of very common rough stuff, hairy inside. Mrs. Levison put it on, quite oblivious to its hirsute powers of irritation, and they hurried to the carriage and drove rapidly home.

There was never such a Christmas Eve! Outside in the snow sprinkled streets, on the white roofs, the moon shone tenderly. They heard distant waifs singing of the great Birth; for money, poor wretches. But she—she had got a bit of the actual thing in her arms. She had found the Woman and the Child. They passed, in their slummy flight, a Catholic church, whose bells were ringing for midnight mass. The people were streaming into the open doors. "I have got it all here," she said to herself, "all that they are looking for. This is Christmas."

When at last they pulled up at the Park lane palace her breath was coming and going feverishly. They entered the great portals, swung open by two shining footmen, while the butler stood in the background. One does not ask what footmen think; but the somecoming procession of the mistress that Christmas Eve was certainly odd.

Mrs. Levison in an old brown cloak over her Paris creation led the way, her arms full of, apparently, her own ermine coat rolled into a bundle, and